



City of Omaha
Jim Suttle, Mayor

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August 12, 2011

Honorable President

And Members of the City Council:

It has come to my attention at this late stage in the Fire Contract process that some of you are considering adding amendments to the proposal currently before you. As Mayor, I am obligated to inform you that I will veto any amended version of the proposed contract. Furthermore, the Firefighters Association, based off discussions during both the negotiating process and after, has already made it clear that they will not accept these particular changes to the proposed contract. Assumptions to the contrary in this instance are not supported by the facts.

It is my hope that the Council will avoid going down the reckless path of an expensive and protracted legal battle that will cost the taxpayers much more in the long term.

As you know, following the Police Association contract vote I reached out to the Council to encourage members to be more actively involved in the Fire Contract negotiation process. Several of you accepted this offer and provided me with numerous ideas, along with concerns and feedback, which were incorporated into the current proposal before you. The proposed Fire Contract is the direct result of a collaborative effort between the Mayor, the Council, and the Firefighters Association.

For various reasons, some proposals from the Mayor's office and the Council were not accepted by the Association, and I have attempted to thoroughly explain those reasons through both Executive Sessions and personal discussions with Councilmembers. Many of those items were not incorporated because they did not achieve significant cost savings, the City and Association had already agreed to pursue them through non-contractual means, or the City and/or Association simply could not come to a resolution satisfactory to both parties. The amendments that have been floated in the media include some that the Association simply will not accept and others that can be addressed without amending the contract.

In addition to the reasons above, the Council's actions risk setting a dangerous precedent. As Mayor, it is my obligation to work closely with collective bargaining units to ensure that the financial health of the City remains strong. By not honoring the agreement we risk creating a disincentive for collective bargaining units to agree to wage freezes and other concessions during times of financial hardship. That is simply unacceptable for the continued growth, financial health, and AAA Credit rating of this city.

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I respectfully request the Council to reconsider proposing amendments to the Fire Contract. This proposed agreement fulfills promises we all made when we ran for office in 2009 to end spiking, raise the retirement age, and fix the long broken pension system. The proposed changes are not significant enough to warrant risking defeat of this contract and breaking our promise to taxpayers.

As always, my door is open to the City Council to discuss this issue further.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Suttle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Jim Suttle, Mayor
City of Omaha

JS/dd